

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T VIENNA 00602

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, IT, AU
SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF: STATE 8082

1. DEPARTMENT WILL BE AWARE THAT DAY AFTER TRANSMITTAL REFTEL, CHANCELLOR KREISKY MADE STATEMENT TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN VIENNA (CARRIED BY REUTER AS EUN 942, JANUARY 19) TO EFFECT THAT USG HELPED COMMUNIST CAUSE OF WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES BY EXPRESSING OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT CHANCELLOR DID NOT WANT TO BE BROUGHT INTO SAME POSITION AS HIS AMERICAN FRIENDS. EVEN IF STATEMENT HAD NOT BEEN MADE -- AND WE UNDERSTAND IT CAME AFTER PERSISTENT PRESSURE OF CORRESPONDENTS FOR COMMENT ON ITALIAN SITUATION -- EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT KREISKY WOULD HAVE BEEN WILLING PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY TO BE SEEN TO BE FOLLOWING IN OUR WAKE EITHER BY: 1) SEEKING TO INFLUENCE CLEARLY ESTABLISHED SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL (SI) POSITION THAT MEMBERS' POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THEIR COUNTRIES IS INDEPENDENT DECISION FOR EACH MEMBER, OR 2) APPROACHING ITALIAN SOCIALISTS DIRECTLY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 VIENNA 00602 241343Z

2. IN VERY PRIVATE SI DISCUSSIONS LIMITED TO HEADS OF PARTY, KREISKY HAS HERETOFORE BEEN QUITE BLUNT IN EXPOUNDING ON HIS SKEPTICISM OF EURO-COMMUNISTS AND ON NEED FOR THEM TO "PROVE" THEMSELVES THROUGH BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM. IN WAKE OF JANUARY 19 STATEMENT, WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT KREISKY WOULD BE WILLING TO GO ANY FURTHER THAN TO RESTATE THESE

WELL-KNOWN VIEWS AND TO ASK ITALIAN SOCIALISTS HOW THEY SEE ITALIAN SCENARIO UNFOLDING IN NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS. EMBASSY THINKS, HOWEVER, THAT IN SPITE OF HIS STATEMENT, KREISKY'S KNOWN CONCERN ABOUT POLITICAL SITUATIONS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE AND IN FRANCE WOULD MAKE APPROACH TO HIM ON "CONSULTATIVE" BASIS WORTHWHILE, IF ONLY TO HELP AVOID UNUSEFUL FUTURE COMMENTS AND TO SEEK THE LIMITED SHOW OF CONCERN IN SI THAT WE BELIEVE POSSIBLE. SUCH CONSULTATIVE EXCHANGE WOULD TAKE MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE OF CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP AMBASSADOR HAS ESTABLISHED WITH KREISKY.

3. SHOULD DEPARTMENT AGREE WITH ABOVE ASSESSMENT AND APPROACH TO KREISKY, IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US TO BE ABLE TO SHARE WITH CHANCELLOR DETAILED EXPRESSIONS OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND CONCERN ABOUT INTERNAL ITALIAN SITUATION AND NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY SITUATION AS USG SEES THEM. KREISKY WOULD ALSO BE INTERESTED IN WHAT ITALY'S DEMOCRATIC PARTIES EXPECT TO DO, AND WHAT WE THINK THEY CAN DO, TO PUT THEIR OWN HOUSES IN ORDER.

4. WHEN CHIPS ARE DOWN, AS IN PAST IN PORTUGAL AND WITH THREATENED CUT IN US FORCES IN EUROPE, KREISKY IS DISPOSED TO BE FORTHRIGHT IN HIS PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN ABOUT THE BALANCE IN EUROPE ON WHICH AUSTRIA'S INTEGRITY DEPENDS. HE HAS, ON SUCH OCCASIONS, WORKED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 VIENNA 00602 241343Z

BEHIND SCENES TO INDUCE EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS TO TAKE APPROPRIATE PARTY AND GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS SUPPORTIVE OF THAT BALANCE. EMBASSY BELIEVES KREISKY WOULD DO SO AGAIN WHEN MADE CLEARLY AWARE OF PRESENT DANGER AND EXTENT TO WHICH USG IS PREPARED TO ACT AGAINST IT. WITHOUT SUCH CONSULTATION, WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT REACTIONS OF KREISKY AND HIS GOVERNMENT WILL SUPPORT OUR OBJECTIVES, AS IN PORTUGUESE AND TROOP-CUT CASES NOTED. WOLF

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